Multiple studies suggest that American women and girls lack a basic understanding of sexual and reproductive health, with disparities noted among racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines. Without this basic knowledge, women and girls may not be empowered to make informed health decisions. A pilot survey of 53 adolescent and youth females from Northeast Georgia collected in 2018 suggested incomplete knowledge of menstruation and average satisfaction with current education. (fem)me, a local non-profit, hopes to address menstrual knowledge gaps through an extracurricular program. A series of interviews with eight community stakeholders was conducted to inform program implementation process. All interviewers saw value in the program, but expressed concerns about administrative logistics and adolescent buy-in. Information from the interviews will be used to develop the program, to be launched in Fall 2019.

**ABSTRACT**

Gaps in menstrual knowledge have been noted in US teens. Girls from low-income and minority communities reported feeling unprepared for puberty and menstruation.

- The knowledge acquired in premenstrual and perimenstrual periods can impact a young woman’s future health decision making significantly.
- In 2018, (fem)me conducted a pilot survey of 53 adolescents and youth in Northeast Georgia that suggested limited understanding of menstruation in the community.
- To address these knowledge gaps, (fem)me is sought stakeholder input on an extracurricular menstrual education course.

**BACKGROUND**

Studies suggest many women in the United States lack a basic understanding of sexual and reproductive health. Needs in the community

- Identified unmet needs in the community for youth centered extracurricular menstrual education program, average rating 8/10.
- Identified barriers include buy-in from adolescents, parents, and teachers, getting district approval, and transportation to program site.
- Suggestions for gaining and maintaining teen interest include incentives/awards, peer-to-peer engagement, having younger facilitators, and engaging teachers.

**OBJECTIVES**

1. Develop an interview template to evaluate value and logistics of a menstrual education course.
2. Recruit a diverse sample of stakeholders.
3. Identify key considerations for future program.

**METHODS**

1. Interview template consisting of 21 questions was developed from subject area knowledge and consultation.
2. 3 questions centered on the background of the stakeholder, 4 centered on the stakeholder’s perceptions of youth needs in the community, 10 centered on the extracurricular menstrual education program, and 4 centered on general feedback.
3. Individuals working with adolescents or involved in healthcare in the Athens area were contacted at least twice for interview.
4. 6 individuals agreed to participation: two high school social workers, one high school health teacher, one local medical student, one local undergraduate student working with youth, one adolescent from the local school district, the executive director of (fem)me, and one local pediatrician.
5. Interviews were conducted in person, over the phone, or via paper using a semi-structured interview template.
6. Survey results were compiled in a spreadsheet and analyzed for themes.

**RESULTS**

- Overall, the idea of a school-based extracurricular menstrual education program was well received.
- Study limitations include sample size and makeup of stakeholders.
- Next steps include implementation of curriculum based on input and feedback provided.
- Success of this intervention can help provide point information and feedback provided.

**CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS**

- Success of this intervention can help provide point information for girls in need about menstrual health and help promote more open discussions related to the subject in general.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank the UHF/NMF Diverse Medical Scholars Program, NMF alumni Ebony Caldwell, Rachel Allen and Suvitha Vasanathan of (fem)me™, Kas Cantwell, Bianca Culver, Angela Goy of the Clarke County School District, Paola Polanco, MD of Athens Neighborhood Health Center, Jessica Ma and Jennie Zhang at the University of Georgia, and Kelsey Barber, Bryanna Moppins, Debbie Shin, and Amy Baldwin, PhD of the AU/UGA Medical Partnership in Athens, GA for their assistance with this project.